

What is claimed is:

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1. A portable authentication device, comprising:
 - a body;
 - a contact area disposed in said body;
 - an identification portion disposed in said body;
 - a display area disposed in said body and including an active display enabled for bistable performance; and
 - a processor, disposed in said body, for providing data to said active display area.
 2. The device of Claim 1, said body comprising:
 - a card approximating a size and shape of a standard credit card.
 3. The device of Claim 2, wherein said card is approximately 85 millimeters (mm) in length, 55mm in width and 1mm thick.
 4. The device of Claim 1, wherein said portable authentication device is enabled for communication with an authentication device interface, said processor being enabled for processing authentication information received from the authentication device interface.
 5. The device of Claim 1, said contact area further comprising:
 - a contact enabled for receiving externally-supplied power.
 6. The device of Claim 1, said contact area further comprising:

a contact enabled for communication of data between said authentication device and an authentication device interface.

7. The device of Claim 1, said active display area comprising:

a variable display;

wherein said variable display is enabled for bistable display of authentication information.

8. The device of Claim 1, further comprising:

a machine-readable portion, coupled to said body, enabled for storage of machine-readable data.

9. The device of Claim 8, wherein said machine-readable portion comprises at least one of a magnetic strip and an optically-readable portion.

10. The device of Claim 1, further comprising:

a communication portion, coupled to said body, for enabling said authentication device for wireless communication between said authentication device and an authentication device interface.

11. The device of Claim 10, said communication portion comprising:

a wireless transmitter/receiver.

12. The device of Claim 11, said communication portion further comprising:

means for communicating data between said wireless transmitter/receiver and a location external to said authentication device.

13. The device of Claim 12, wherein said means for communicating comprise an antenna embedded in said body.

14. The device of Claim 1, further comprising:

a memory portion, disposed in said body, enabled for storing data.

15. The device of Claim 14, wherein said memory portion stores biometric identification data of a patron.

16. The device of Claim 15, wherein said memory portion stores data for at least one of display in said active display area, for user authentication, for patron preferences and for system data.

17. An authentication system, comprising:

a portable authentication device having an active display;

a database server; and

an authentication device interface, coupling said portable authentication device and said database server.

18. The system of Claim 17, further comprising:

an authentication device reader, coupled to said authentication device data interface, for communicating directly with and identifying said portable authentication device.

19. The system of Claim 17, further comprising:

a public network in communication with each of said portable authentication device, said database server and said authentication device interface.

20. The system of Claim 17, further comprising:

a venue portion, coupling said database server and said authentication device data interface;

wherein said venue portion communicates authentication data associated with a venue to said authentication device interface upon detection of said authentication device.

21. The system of Claim 17, further comprising:

a patron portion, coupling said database server and said authentication device interface;

wherein said patron portion communicates authentication data associated with a venue to said database server in response to a request by a patron.

22. The system of Claim 17, further comprising:

a phone ordering interface, coupling said database server to a public network;

wherein said phone ordering interface communicates authentication data associated with a venue to said database server in response to a request by a patron received via a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

23. A method for authenticating a patron having an authentication device, comprising:
- providing an authentication device having an active display;
 - updating a database server with authentication data associated with a venue;
 - displaying display data corresponding to the authentication data on the authentication device;
 - establishing a communication between the authentication device and the database server;
- and
- deciding whether to grant the patron access to the venue based on the communication.
24. The method of Claim 23, further comprising:
- comparing identification data of the authentication device and the authentication data;
- and
- granting to the patron access to the venue if the identification data of the authentication device and the authentication data match.
25. The method of Claim 24, wherein the identification data is identifiable with the patron based on patron data stored in the database server.
26. The method of Claim 23, further comprising:
- verifying an association between the patron and the authentication device prior to said granting.

27. The method of Claim 23, wherein said establishing is of a communication link between an authentication device interface located at the venue and the database server.

28. The method of Claim 23, further comprising:
receiving a request from the patron for authorization to enter the venue;
wherein said updating is in response to the request.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the request is received from a location remote to the database server.

30. The method of Claim 23, wherein said establishing takes place over a public network.